

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ScholarWorks @ UTRGV

Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications
and Presentations

Interdisciplinary Programs and Community
Engagement

2-2015

Book Review: San Miguel, Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community

Maritza De La Trinidad
maritza.delatrinidad@utrgv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas_fac

 Part of the [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

De La Trinidad, Maritza, "Book Review: San Miguel, Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community" (2015). *Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 2.
https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas_fac/2

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Engagement at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community. By Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013. xi + 240 pp. \$40 cloth)

Guadalupe San Miguel's *Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community* is the seventh book in the University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies. The author provides a historical overview of the multiple strategies and methods that Mexican American activists, organizations, and like-minded individuals employed in order to obtain not only quality education but also culturally relevant and religious education for Mexican-origin students from the 1960s to 2010. San Miguel focuses on this period in order to show how Mexican American education evolved in the post-Civil Rights era and how different groups pushed for educational reforms to achieve their specific goals within the context of significant social, economic, and political change.

The first of the five chapters in this volume examines changes in Mexican American education after 1960. San Miguel argues that while Mexican Americans no longer suffered "structural exclusion" they continued to experience "differentiated exclusion" (p. 8). Despite improved access to better educational opportunities, especially bilingual education, a curriculum that validated their cultural and linguistic heritage, and educational policy making at the local, state, and national levels, Mexican-origin students continued to experience segregation, poor performance, high drop-out rates, and low levels of higher-education attainment from 1972 to 2000. While existing studies provide some explanation for the persistence of these issues, San Miguel makes it clear that further research is required in these areas.

Chapter 2 describes how students, parents, community leaders, and organizations challenged segregation, disparities in school funding, IQ testing, English-only instruction, exclusion of undocumented children from public schools, and school closures. They did so via walkouts, grassroots organizing, and lawsuits. The crux of this chapter highlights the most important legal cases that challenged discriminatory policies and practices. Here San Miguel gives us a hint as to what is missing in the literature, pointing to the "dearth of historical studies on all of these legal challenges" (p. 32).

Chapter 3 focuses on the fight for political representation in Crystal City, access to higher education, multicultural and culturally relevant curricula and Chicano Studies during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. These years saw legislation such as California's Proposition 209 and cases such as *Hopwood v. State of Texas* and *Bakke v. Regents of*

the University of California (1978), which dismantled affirmative action programs in California and Texas despite challenges from the community. Chapter 4 emphasizes the push for bilingual education through the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and describes the ebbs and flows of programs that went from compensatory, to enrichment, to voluntary, and finally to abolition as legislation changed during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Despite conflicts surrounding the contradictions of providing bilingual education in segregated settings, it is clear that bilingual education has played a significant role in promoting a more equitable education for Mexican-origin students. Chapter 5 is especially interesting because it examines Mexican Americans' relationship to private schools, religious education, charter schools, and alternative, community-based schools, which emerged in the late 1960s as a response to the poor-quality education and exclusion Mexican Americans experienced in Southwest public school districts. San Miguel argues that Mexican Americans supported these schools because they provided parents with choices that enabled them to provide their children with an academically rigorous education, mitigate the negative effects of Americanization and discrimination, maintain their religious values, and support Spanish-language instruction.

Overall, San Miguel provides an important synthesis of scholarship produced by educational researchers since the 1970s. In doing so, the author not only highlights the significant contributions students of Mexican American education have made to this field of research but also the role that Mexican Americans have played in promoting tangible improvements in educational outcomes, curriculum, and access to better education. This makes the volume an ideal text for courses on Mexican American education, foundations of education, and the history of U.S. education.

University of Texas-Pan American

MARITZA DE LA TRINIDAD

Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective. By Donna R. Gabaccia. (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2012. xi + 271 pp. \$29.95 cloth)

It is quite something to read a historian writing at the top of her game. In its elegance and range, this book reminded this reader of Michel Foucault's much-cited *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. Like that book, *Foreign Relations* proposes a new interpretation of governance and power; and, like the Foucault essays, its impact is likely to be profound.